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Inspection  
Service

**Wildlife  
Services**

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## WILDLIFE SERVICES—OREGON

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### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Oregon

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Oregon Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Oregon is a diverse mix of urban, suburban, and rural settings with coastal, mountain, desert, forest, and agricultural environments. This ecological and geographic diversity gives the State a remarkably diverse range of wildlife species. WS biologists assist Oregon livestock, timber, fruit, and grass-seed producers to reduce losses caused by predators, birds, and rodents. The program addresses serious beaver damage to transportation infrastructure, timber, and water control structures, and protects the lives of pilots, air passengers, and aircraft from dangerous wildlife collisions. WS also assists in protecting natural resources, including threatened and endangered species, from wildlife predators.

### Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to

#### Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting livestock and crop resources from mammalian and avian predators
- Protecting timber from bear and beaver damage
- Protecting grass-seed and other crops from Canada goose damage
- Protecting people and pets from injuries and diseases caused by wildlife, including predators like cougars, coyotes, raccoons, skunks, and bears
- Protecting passengers and aircraft and military operations from wildlife hazards at airports

#### Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Oregon:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs; including identifying potential disease transmission to people and livestock via goose feces
- Managing predators through new methods to protect livestock and wildlife
- Protecting timber and forest resources
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management



develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

**Protecting Agriculture Resources**—Agriculture is an economic force in all 36 Oregon counties. A 1997 National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) study reported that Oregon farmers lost \$158 million in crops to wildlife damage. This damage affected 47 percent of Oregon's farms. Unfortunately, these losses are felt most acutely by small farmers and ranchers. Ninety-five percent of WS customers are small family farms. The NASS survey further documented that agriculture producers spent more than \$6 million on efforts to prevent wildlife damage. On average, each producer assisted by WS was able to prevent approximately \$3,100 in wildlife damage. During the past calendar year, WS assisted more than 4,400 agricultural producers, saving them a conservative estimate of more than \$13.8 million in avoided losses to crops and livestock. This savings represents a benefit to cost ratio of 6.1:1.

As a result of the NASS survey, the Oregon State Board of Agriculture passed a resolution recognizing the significant negative economic impact wildlife can have on Oregon's agricultural producers. The board also noted that assistance to producers experiencing wildlife damage to their crops should be increased to adequately address the problem. Many farms are struggling economically and depend on the timely, professional assistance WS provides to help protect their livelihood.

Timber production plays a vital role in Oregon's economy, culture and customs. The forest products industry is Oregon's largest manufacturing employer, with approximately 65,000 Oregonians working in sawmills, plywood plants, pulp and paper manufacturing, logging and trucking companies, and wood furniture manufacturing facilities.

ties. There has been a dramatic shift of timber harvest from public lands to private lands since the early 1990's. Bear damage to stands of trees on private lands is conservatively estimated to be \$11.5 million annually. Bears emerging from hibernation foraging for food damage trees by peeling the outer bark and eating the newly-forming vascular tissues. A single bear can damage 50-70 trees in a day. If left unchecked bear damage can occur to more than 70 percent of the trees in a stand. WS assists timber producers in Western Oregon by providing an integrated wildlife damage management (IWDM) program which incorporates: selectively removing bears causing damage, providing alternative feed for bears and recommending silvicultural and management practices that may make trees less palatable to bears.

**Protecting Public Health and Safety**—Local cougar population densities exceed any documented in North America. Young and displaced cougars looking to establish their territories encroach on residential areas and threaten public safety. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the Oregon State Police Wildlife Division (OSP) have increased their reliance on WS to investigate and resolve cougar conflicts. In 2004, WS responded to 202 threats to public health and safety posed by cougars in addition to 474 incidents of cougar predation on livestock and 31 cougar predation events involving pets. In addition, WS personnel have provided training for ODFW, OSP, and local law enforcement agencies on how to identify cougar signs, cougar victims, and implement cougar management techniques.

**Protecting Air Travel**—WS has assisted most of Oregon's major airports and associated Air National Guard Units by providing technical assistance, conducting wildlife hazard assessments, writing wildlife hazard management plans, providing wildlife removal services, and training airport staff on ways to minimize wildlife threats to air travelers. WS also developed a habitat management plan for State Air National Guard facilities.

The State Department of Aviation (SDA) relies on WS to review land development projects to evaluate the potential for them to attract wildlife and create wildlife hazards to aircraft operations. Additionally, SDA relies on WS to remove wildlife on airports that have or may cause collisions with aircraft.

**Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species**—WS completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for protecting the Federally listed threatened Western Snowy Plover on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service. These agencies have identified predation of plover eggs and young plovers as the most significant hurdle to restoring plover populations. Predators are responsible for more than 60 percent of all mortality of eggs and young despite extensive efforts by these agen-

#### Major Cooperators:

- Oregon state agencies and universities
- County governments and sheriff's departments
- Cities and municipalities throughout Oregon
- Federal Aviation Administration, and civilian and military airports
- Private individuals and associations
- Agricultural associations
- Sportsmen
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

cies to halt predation with nonlethal management methods. The EA analyzed an integrated approach for managing the damage, incorporating both nonlethal and lethal management measures. During the 2003 and 2004 nesting seasons, predator management to protect plovers conducted by WS was responsible for record setting nesting success with 91 and 107 successful nests respectfully. Previous to WS involvement the average number of successful nests produced annually was 37.

## Looking to the Future

Successful wolf reintroduction in Idaho means future wolf conflicts with livestock in Oregon. At least three wolves have entered Oregon from the experimental population in Idaho. FWS anticipates many more wolves entering Oregon in the future. In February 2005, the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Commission approved a State Wolf Management Plan developed by the Oregon Wolf Advisory Council, comprised representatives of wolf advocate groups, local governments, land management agencies, Tribes, producer groups, academia and citizens. The plan calls on WS to perform critical roles such as the investigation of suspected wolf predation and conducting federal and state authorized wolf management actions. As in other States where wolves have been reintroduced, the presence of wolves in Oregon will increase and complicate demands on the WS program. WS' efforts to control predator damage caused by coyotes, cougars, bears, foxes, and bobcats will be hampered by the presence of wolves because traditional predator management tools will be restricted when wolves are present.

## Oregon Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; sportsmen; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

